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PREPARED STATEMENT

BY

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OF THE

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AND

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

PRESENTED BEFORE THE SENATE LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

JANUARY 15, 1987

MR. CHAIRMAN, I WELCOME THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BRING BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT ON ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME...OR AIDS.

IN FEBRUARY 1986, DURING A VISIT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, PRESIDENT REAGAN ASKED ME TO REPORT TO HIM AND TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ON JUST WHAT THE AIDS THREAT WAS ALL ABOUT.

ALTHOUGH THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE AND OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS DISSEMINATED CURRENT, ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT AIDS, THE COUNTRY WAS RIFE WITH RUMORS AND MISINFORMATION ABOUT THE DISEASE AND THE PEOPLE WHO WERE AT THE HIGHEST RISK.

THE GREATEST HUMAN FEAR, OF COURSE, IS THE FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN. THEREFORE, THE PRESIDENT DIRECTED ME TO LAY BEFORE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE EVERYTHING THAT WAS KNOWN...AND TO DO THAT IN PLAIN ENGLISH. FROM THAT DAY ON, BARELY A DAY WENT BY OVER THE NEXT EIGHT MONTHS THAT I WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THAT ASSIGNMENT IN SOME WAY.

I WAS SURE THAT AN OBJECTIVE REPORT ON THE HEALTH AND MEDICAL ASPECTS OF AIDS COULD BE PRODUCED, DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF MANY SENSITIVE AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES. SURGEONS GENERAL HAVE DONE THAT IN SIMILAR SITUATIONS IN THE PAST, AND I AM COMMITTED TO MAINTAIN THAT TRADITION.

I ALSO CONSCIOUSLY TRIED TO MAKE SURE THAT THE SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT ON AIDS DID NOT MERELY REFLECT MY OWN OR ANY SINGLE PERSON'S VALUES, OPINIONS, OR PREJUDICES. TO THAT END, I MADE THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE EFFORT TO SECURE THE ADVICE AND COUNSEL FROM A BROAD SPECTRUM OF CONCERNED INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS. I CONSULTED WITH THE BEST MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS AVAILABLE FROM WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT. BUT I ALSO MET WITH LEADERS OF MANY ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH THE HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE; I WANTED TO HEAR WHAT THEY, TOO, HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE THREAT OF THE AIDS VIRUS.

THE RESPONSE TO MY REQUEST HAS BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF EXTRAORDINARY. FOR EXAMPLE...

* MRS. ANN KAHN, THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PTA, WROTE TO TELL ME THAT SHE AND HER COLLEAGUES "BENEFITED GREATLY" FROM OUR MEETING AND WENT ON TO SAY, "WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO SHARE A COPY OF YOUR REPORT WITH OUR 25,000 LOCAL UNITS."

* PRESIDENT MARY HATWOOD FUTRELL OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION TOLD ME SHE HAD ORDERED 3,000 COPIES OF THE REPORT "FOR DISTRIBUTION TO NEA LEADERS."

* LEW BARKER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN RED CROSS, TOLD ME MY REPORT WAS "CLEAR, INCISIVE, ACCURATE, AND OF GREAT VALUE " TO THE RED CROSS AS IT PURSUES ITS OWN PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

* AFTER I MET WITH LARRY BRAIDFOOT AND HIS COLLEAGUES FROM THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, HE SAID THE MEETING HAD BEEN "A VERY HELPFUL ONE IN CATALYZING WITHIN OUR GROUP A FOCUS FOR A GROWING CONCERN ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND ITS THREAT TO OUR SOCIETY AND ITS FAMILIES."

* AND AFTER A "JOINT CONSULTATION" ON THE AIDS REPORT WITH THE SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL OF AMERICA, RABBI HENRY D. MICHELMAN ASSURED ME THAT THE COUNCIL "WISHES TO COOPERATE WITH (ME) IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE."

THOSE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES OF MANY THAT I COULD OFFER, IF WE HAD THE TIME. IN ANY CASE, MR. CHAIRMAN, I'VE ATTACHED TO THE CONCLUDING PAGE OF THIS STATEMENT A LIST OF ALL 26 ORGANIZATIONS.

FINALLY, WHEN IT CAME TIME TO DO THE ACTUAL WRITING -- FOR WHICH I PERSONALLY TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY -- I TRIED TO BE AS SENSITIVE AS POSSIBLE TO CERTAIN FEELINGS THAT HAD BEEN SHARED WITH ME BY MANY OF THOSE SAME INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS, YET NOT BE SO SENSITIVE AS TO PREJUDICE THE OBJECTIVE INFORMATION IN ANY WAY.

THANKS TO THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SO MANY CONCERNED AND DEDICATED PEOPLE, I WAS ABLE TO PRODUCE A REPORT WHICH, I BELIEVE, REFLECTS A WIDE RANGE OF EXPERIENCE WITH THIS DISEASE AND WITH MANY OF THE KEY ISSUES THAT SURROUND IT. THE REPORT PRESENTS IN PLAIN ENGLISH ALL THE MOST UP-TO-DATE, PERTINENT, AND FACTUAL INFORMATION THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE NEED TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND THEIR LOVED ONES FROM THE SPREAD OF AIDS.

I FINISHED THE MANUSCRIPT THIS PAST SEPTEMBER. I PRESENTED IT TO THE HEALTH WORK GROUP OF THE CABINET COUNCIL AND TO THE WHITE HOUSE DOMESTIC COUNCIL AS A WHOLE. THEY ACCEPTED MY REPORT WITHOUT CHANGE AND SENT IT IN TO THE PRESIDENT. I THEN RELEASED THE DOCUMENT AT A DEPARTMENT PRESS CONFERENCE ON OCTOBER 22. AT THIS TIME, I WANT TO SUBMIT A COPY FOR THE RECORD.

IF I MAY, MR. CHAIRMAN, I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE FOR THE RECORD THAT THROUGHOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT, I WAS ACCORDED FULL INDEPENDENCE TO PURSUE THE RESEARCH AND WRITING OF MY REPORT IN WHATEVER MANNER I THOUGHT APPROPRIATE AND AT NO TIME DID ANYONE IN GOVERNMENT TRY TO EXERCISE ANY UNDUE INFLUENCE UPON THE OUTCOME.

MR. CHAIRMAN, IF I HAD TO GIVE JUST THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT, I WOULD OFFER THESE THREE:

FIRST, THE RISK OF INFECTION INCREASES WITH INCREASED NUMBERS OF SEXUAL PARTNERS -- MALE OR FEMALE. ANYONE WHO ENGAGES IN FREEWHEELING, CASUAL SEX IS PLAYING A DANGEROUS GAME. UNLESS YOU KNOW WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY THAT YOUR SEX PARTNER HAS NOT BECOME INFECTED WITH THE AIDS VIRUS -- THROUGH SEX OR THROUGH DRUG USE -- YOU'RE TAKING A CHANCE ON BECOMING INFECTED. CONVERSELY, UNLESS YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT YOU YOURSELF ARE NOT CARRYING THE AIDS VIRUS, YOU MUST CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY THAT YOU CAN INFECT OTHERS.

SECOND, THE BEST PROTECTION AGAINST INFECTION RIGHT NOW, BARRING ABSTINENCE, IS THE USE OF A CONDOM. A CONDOM SHOULD BE USED DURING SEXUAL RELATIONS, FROM START TO FINISH, WITH ANYONE WHOM YOU KNOW IS -- OR SUSPECT MIGHT BE -- INFECTED.

AND THIRD, WE NEED TO GET THE FACTS ABOUT THIS DISEASE TO EVERY ADULT AND EVERY ADOLESCENT. MANY PEOPLE -- ESPECIALLY OUR YOUTH -- ARE NOT RECEIVING INFORMATION THAT IS VITAL TO THEIR FUTURE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BECAUSE OF OUR RETICENCE IN DEALING WITH THE SUBJECTS OF SEX, SEXUAL PRACTICES, AND HOMOSEXUALITY. THIS SILENCE MUST END. WE CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO SIDESTEP FRANK, OPEN DISCUSSIONS ABOUT SEXUAL PRACTICES. AS PARENTS, EDUCATORS, AND COMMUNITY LEADERS, WE MUST ASSUME OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH EDUCATION ABOUT HUMAN SEXUALITY. I WOULD PREFER THAT SUCH EDUCATION BE PROVIDED IN BY A CHILD'S PARENTS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE FAMILY. BUT WE ALSO NEED SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS, BEGINNING AT THE LOWEST GRADE POSSIBLE AS PART OF ANY APPROPRIATE HEALTH AND HYGIENE PROGRAM. WITH THAT KIND OF ASSISTANCE, OUR CHILDREN CAN GROW UP KNOWING THE KINDS OF BEHAVIOR TO AVOID IN ORDER TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THE THREAT OF AIDS SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO PERMIT A SEX EDUCATION CURRICULUM WITH A HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THE PREVENTION OF AIDS AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES. THE NEED IS CRITICAL THE PRICE OF NEGLECT IS HIGH.

AS PART OF OUR OWN EDUCATION AND INFORMATION EFFORT, WE HAVE ALREADY DISTRIBUTED OVER 250,000 FREE COPIES OF THE SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT IN RESPONSE TO TELEPHONE AND MAIL REQUESTS TO MY OFFICE AND TO OTHER AGENCIES WITHIN THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE.

IN ADDITION, SUCH PUBLICATIONS AS THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND THE LOS ANGELES TIMES HAVE REPRINTED THE REPORT IN FULL FOR THEIR READERS. WE HAVE MADE CAMERA-READY COPIES AVAILABLE TO A NUMBER OF NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WHO WISH TO DO THEIR OWN PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTION.

THE REPORT HAS ALSO EITHER BEEN COPIED OR IS BEING CIRCULATED AS-IS IN MANY COUNTRIES ON FIVE CONTINENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GOVERNMENTS OF FRANCE AND AUSTRALIA HAVE INFORMED US THAT THEY INTEND TO REPRINT AND DISTRIBUTE THE REPORT AMONG THEIR OWN CITIZENS. AND LATER THIS WEEK I WILL BE MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, WHO WISH TO DO THEIR OWN REPORT, MODELLED CLOSELY UPON OURS.

WITH THIS KIND OF RECEPTION, I BELIEVE THE SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT ON ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME IS HAVING THE SALUTARY EFFECT THE PRESIDENT HAD HOPED FOR...NOT ONLY HERE IN THE UNITED STATES BUT ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD AS WELL.

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN. AND NOW, I'LL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS.

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During the preparation of the Surgeon General's Report on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, MD, met personally and privately with representatives of the following groups:

AIDS Advocacy Groups

AIDS Action Council
National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays
National Minority AIDS Council

Business

American Council on Life Insurance
Health Insurance Institute
Washington Business Group on Health

Education

National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Education Association
National Parents and Teachers Association

Health

American Dental Association
American Hospital Association
American Medical Association
American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Red Cross
National Hemophilia Foundation

Labor

American Federation of Teachers
Service Employees International Union

Public Officials

Association of State and Territorial Health Officers
National Association of County Health Officials
U.S. Conference of Local Health Officers

Religion

Christian Life Council of the Southern Baptist Convention
National Council of Churches of Christ
Synagogue Council of America
U.S. Catholic Conference